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Take Care of Electric Cords and Plugs

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Broadcast by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, and Wallace Kadderly, Radio Service, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, April 13, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

—ooOoo—

WALLACE KADDERLY: And now Ruth Van Deman with another chapter on how to keep household equipment lasting for the duration ... or longer.

RUTH VAN DEMAN: This time it's a chapter on life lines for electric appliances.

KADDERLY: Life lines? Or live lines?

VAN DEMAN: I'll leave that for our live wire friends to decide. Anyway, here it is, in print ... a new folder on electric cords and plugs ... how to care for them so they won't wear out ... how to repair them when they do.

KADDERLY: You're right, we can't take new electric cords for granted any longer. Rubber and copper have gone to war.

VAN DEMAN: Maybe the war will get us into better habits. Most of us have been careless, sometimes dangerously careless, with electric cords and plugs. We've yanked them out of their sockets. We've banged the plugs on hard floors. We've walked over the cords, and been angry when they tripped us up. We've bent them, scorched them. Some people in a thoughtless moment have even grabbed hold of electric cords with wet hands while they were plugged into the current and been electrocuted on the spot.

KADDERLY: Ruth, is this a bill of indictment against us ... indictment for our careless treatment of electric cords and plugs?

VAN DEMAN: Don't you think we deserve it?

KADDERLY: Yes. But I think many of us have no idea how an electric cord and plug is made. We don't realize why they need to be treated gently.

VAN DEMAN: That's where this new folder can help. Open it up. There you see is a whole series of pictures showing how to make a new connection for an appliance plug. Look at that first one where the damaged end of the cord's being cut off. See the two bundles of fine copper wires, with the insulating material wrapped around each bundle?

KADDERLY: Yes. They show plainly. They're the fine copper wires that carry the electric current. If they get twisted and broken, there's likely to be a short circuit ... maybe a fire.

VAN DEMAN: These pictures, and the directions in words tell exactly how to cut off that damaged part of the wire and make a safe new connection.

KADDERLY: And I notice a set of pictures here too, showing how to splice a broken cord.

VAN DEMAN: To make a really good job of that you need to get out the soldering iron

KADDERLY: Do women take to that?

VAN DEMAN: Some do. And more probably will before the war's over. Women have learned to weld airplanes. If they can do that, they certainly can solder the delicate copper wires in a cord to keep the electric iron or the toaster in commission.

KADDERLY: How about women's clubs setting up fix-it or mend-it clinics? In a central place like that they could bring together the right tools. And maybe some expert in the neighborhood would give a demonstration to start them off.

VAN DEMAN: That's an excellent suggestion, Wallace. Electric cords and plugs must be repaired right. Otherwise they're a very serious risk to life and property. It's always better to do a job like this under the eye of a person who understands electricity and all its hazards.

KADDERLY: This might be a good school project, too.

VAN DEMAN: Right you are. A boy or a girl could learn a lot about electricity by repairing a broken cord or a plug.

KADDERLY: I take it this new folder is ready to send to anyone who wants it?

VAN DEMAN: Yes, to use at home or at school or at a mend-it clinic. Just send a card to the U. S. Department of Agriculture here in Washington, D. C. Address it "Home Economics." Ask for the folder on electric cords....how to make electric cords last longer.

Wallace, it's rather a coincidence we should be talking on this subject today—Thomas Jefferson's birthday.

KADDERLY: How so?

VAN DEMAN: Because of Jefferson's interest in all things mechanical. As you know, he designed and made things for his own house at Monticello....furniture, dumb-waiters from cellar to dining room, a self-winding clock....all sorts of things to make everyday living more comfortable and convenient.

And as you know, Jefferson was profoundly interested in seeing American people enjoy more of the good things of life. If he were alive today, I think he'd take great pride in the millions of pieces of electrical equipment in American homes.

He knew what war meant, too....what adjustments have to be made in living during wartime. I think Thomas Jefferson would be pleased to see American women doing more mechanical jobs today....even on such a small scale as repairing electric cords to keep household equipment running.

I hope I'm not presumptuous, Wallace, giving this very homely salute to Mr. Jefferson on his birthday.

KADDERLY: Not in the least, Ruth. Last Friday, Secretary Wickard saluted Thomas Jefferson as a farmer. And everybody is paying him homage today as a great statesman. It's only right we should remember his home interests.